



HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Improved Health of Pregnant Women & Newborn Babies Conference

Kosovo's doctors and nurses spent two days reviewing practices and planning future actions to help promote healthier babies and mothers. The conference, "Improving Outcomes of Pregnancy: A Perinatal Medicine Continuing Education Conference," brought together 530 medical professionals on September 20 - 21 in Pristina, to study techniques to improve the survival of premature babies and to help ensure healthy pregnancies and births.



For healthy babies

Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director joined Dr. Fadil Kryeziu, Deputy Minister of Health, in opening the conference. The conference was led by faculty and staff from the Dartmouth Medical School and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center of Lebanon, New Hampshire, USA in conjunction with lecturers from the University of Prishtine Clinical Center who have trained in the USA as part of the Alliance project. Supported by USAID's Alliance for Healthy Newborns project, the conference provided lectures on the latest evidence-based methods for caring for women during normal and complicated pregnancies and caring for newborn babies - especially premature babies.

The conference was designed to further develop the capacity and collaboration of the regional hospital system, and present US and Kosovar partners with information on project results to date. Key successes of the project have been the provision of antenatal care to nearly 1,000 women in Family Medicine centers, and improvements in neonatal intensive care techniques such as the use of CPAP respiratory support and administration of the medication surfactant that resulted in increased survival for premature babies.

The Alliance for Healthy Newborns is an 18-month program designed to assist in improving the care of pregnant women and newborns by working at the community (family medicine) and hospital levels across Kosovo. The project brings together public and private sector partners to address priority health needs of maternal and infant survival. The project is led by Dartmouth Medical School, with partners AmeriCares Foundation, Kosovo's Ministry of Health, the University of Prishtine Clinical Center, the Center for the Development of Family Medicine and Family Medicine Centers in six municipalities.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business development has no ethnic boundaries

A freezing and cold storage facility was officially opened by Tina Kaidanow, US Office in Pristina Chief of Mission, and Stanko Jokovljevic, Mayor of Shterpce/Strpce, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 19.

"This project is special because it represents a mutually beneficial commercial arrangement between a Serb firm and an Albanian-majority cooperative" said Kaidanow. "Together, these two organizations have an extensive network, buying from hundreds of local collectors covering all the villages in Shterpce/Strpce municipality." The construction was a joint venture of Scardus Company and Qingjat e Sharrit Cooperative, the first a Serb owned company and the latter an Albanian-majority owned. The companies invested about 60,000Euros in constructing this facility, and USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support added an additional 25,000Euros to the initiative.

This joint venture initiative is unique as it will benefit hundreds of collectors in the surrounding mountain villages. By constructing storage and cooling facilities for a wide array of products to be stored, the duration of the collection season will be expanded so that it will start in late March and end with the first snowfalls of November, thereby providing longer-term employment and incomes for the collectors. The facility employs 4 full time staffers.

An added benefit of this new facility is stimulating the creation of new value chains for Kosovo products through the planting of other berries which have known market potential, especially cane berries such as raspberries, blackberries, and red and black currents.

As with blueberries, these other berries also suffer from high rates of post-harvest respiration and require freezing soon after harvest. By planting cane berries near the existing freezing facilities, farmers will be assured that their post-harvest handling problems are solved. These berries have the positive features of being labor intensive with high returns per unit of land area cultivated; they are about four times as profitable as growing corn.

Kosovo companies meeting HACCP certification standards

Agroprodukt Commerce, the first Kosovo-based food processor to achieve Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) standards, was certified on September 7, 2007.

Supported by USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support Project (KCBS), Agroprodukt Commerce hosted the ceremony of certification and introduced 125 guests with products and qualities. The company is the leading agricultural company in Kosovo engaged in collecting, preparing and exporting wild mushrooms, blueberries and blackberries.

Founded in 1969, Agroprodukt Commerce has been a USAID's partner since the beginning of the KCBS project in 2004. Through its 16 collection points, the company engages in collecting mushrooms (mainly Porcini and Boletus sold whole fresh, whole frozen, sliced dried and boiled canned), blueberries (actually bilberries, Vaccinium myrtillus sold frozen in 10 kg blocks) and other wild fruits collected from the forest, accounting for roughly 60% of Kosovo's exports of these products.

Their success is based on consistently providing customers with high quality products while constantly working to improve them. With 16 off-site collection/buying centers throughout Kosovo, Agroprodukt Commerce has 16 year-round employees and about 250 seasonal workers. The company exports 100% of its mushrooms, primarily to ingredient makers in Western Europe.

CONFLICT MITIGATION

Freedom House Announcement: Kosovo Community Reconciliation Program

The Kosovo Community Reconciliation Program (KCRP) has launched a new call for applications to civil society groups that work to promote cross-community reconciliation.

Grants will be awarded to civil society organizations with innovative ideas to promote productive dialog, create advocacy coalitions, encourage inter-ethnic collaboration, or otherwise advance reconciliation.

To date, KCRP has supported projects involving public education and advocacy on reconciliation, joint news and music programming for Serbian and Albanian radio stations, multi-ethnic arts and cultural programs for youth, bilingual literacy courses in multi-lingual communities, training for NGOs, and others. The current call for proposals also encourages civil society to suggest creative projects dealing with decentralization and local government, freedom of movement, and human rights monitoring.

The deadline for application is November 5, 2007. Information on how to apply can be obtained by contacting Freedom House at telephone number 038/248-699, or by email at freedomhouse.ks@gmail.com

Sesame Street Books

A new initiative to extend important messages about diversity and understanding was launched today by Sesame Street and UNICEF. The initiative is part of continued effort of Rruga Sezam/Ulica Sezam, a locally produced version of the popular children's television program Sesame Street reaches thousands of children in Kosovo. The initiative extends beyond television and reaches children and their families through a compilation of Rruga Sezam/Ulica Sezam - themed storybooks, picture books, and facilitator guides for educators published in Albanian and Serbian.

The production of Sesame Street was supported by the United States Agency for International Development, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and UNICEF.

Upcoming Events

October 1 - Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID Director will speak at the Launch of the Antitrafficking month.

October 9 - USAID/Kosovo will dedicate the moot courtroom at the Faculty of Law, of the University of Prishtina.

October 15- Dedication of construction and refurbishment of the Community Center in Partesh/s.



U.S. Agency for International Development
Arbëria (Dragodan), Ismail Qemali st., nr. 1
Phone: ++ 381 38 243 673
Fax: ++ 381 38 249 493

For more information visit www.usaid.gov/missions/kosovo and www.pristina.usmission.gov or contact us at kosovousaidinfo@usaid.gov